

A Discourse to the Despairing

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"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, Why do you look, one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get down there, and buy for us there; that we may live, and not die." [Genesis 42:1,2](#).

JACOB had reached an age in which natural vigor had gone out of him. He was getting very old and was worn and weary, yet here he seems to lead the way in providing for his family. It was he who spoke to the younger men, his sons, and urged them to go down into Egypt to buy food. Jacob was of a timorous disposition in his latter days—he had an old man's fear of that which is high and the grasshopper had become a burden to him—yet he proposed to his sons that they should make a venturesome journey into Egypt! It was a great undertaking for them, for they were stay-at-homes, and not travelers. They were shepherds, whose time was occupied in looking after the welfare of their flocks, and not in roaming over foreign countries. They thought it would be a burdensome responsibility and a perilous risk to cross the desert and go down into Egypt, yet Jacob proposed this to them as the only way of escape from famine and death. Here is an instance in which an aged father woke up his sons to action by telling them good news and by chiding them because of their despairing looks and words.

I am going to use the passage in this way. There are many persons who are sitting down in a kind of stupor. They have no hope and, therefore, they are doing nothing at all. They need to be told the good and blessed tidings concerning salvation and to be urged to make a right use of that news and to avail themselves of the provision of which they are informed. I shall give myself, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, to the happy task of following out that line of thought under these three heads. First, despair is useless. "Why do you look, one upon another?" Secondly, hope is well-grounded. "I have heard that there is corn in Egypt." Thirdly, action is reasonable. "Get you down there, and buy for us there; that we may live, and not die."

I. First, DESPAIR IS USELESS.

I have never heard, yet, of anybody who derived any good from despair. Let me correct myself, there is a kind of despair which is the work of the Spirit of God. I wish that you all felt it—a despair of self-salvation, a despair of washing away your own sin, despair of obtaining any merit of your own by which you can become acceptable in the sight of God—but men never come to it unless the Spirit of God brings them. We are always ready to hope in

ourselves with that self-conceited hope which is abhorrent to God. And it is a great mercy when, at last, the Spirit of God, like the hot blast of the Sirocco, passes over the green field and every flower therein is withered! What said the Prophet? "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness, thereof, is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades: because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the people is grass." That is a blessed kind of despair! But of any other sort of despair, in reference to eternal things, I cannot say anything that is good. I believe that Giant Despair has his dungeons full of the skeletons of men—he is a giant and devours those who come in his way—and he never helped a pilgrim on the road to the Celestial City. He never worked any good to any soul that came under his power. I cannot set you free from his grasp, but I can and do pray that the Spirit of God may deliver you out of his clutches!

These sons of Jacob looked upon one another despairingly, it seems, and their old father watched their looks till, at last, he asked them, "Why do you look, one upon another?" Their looks expressed great sadness. They had never before been in such a plight. No corn for the asses, no bread for the children, no food for themselves. Not one of them smiled,

but grim sadness sat on every countenance, and all their faces gathered blackness. One looked at his brother and saw that he was sad. And that brother looked at the next one and perceived that he was mournful and gloomy. The light of a man's countenance is often like the shining of the sun—one bright face will make another full of joy and gladness—but when all the sons of Jacob were sad, their sadness was increased as they looked, one upon another. Now, when a man knows that he has no hope. When he feels that he cannot save himself. When he hungers for the Bread of Life and yet has none of it—when he looks to others who are in same case, and they only reply, "It is even so. We are also starving. We are lost"—well, then, it is a sad, sad business altogether.

Next, their faces expressed inability. Judah looked on Reuben and Reuben stared back at his brother, as much as to say, "Do not gaze at me, Judah, for I cannot do anything! I have emptied my last sack of corn." Then Reuben looked across to Simeon and Simeon turned to Zebulon—and they all shook their heads and each one said—"It is no use looking to me. I cannot relieve you in this time of famine, even in the slightest degree. I have more than I can do to take care of my own wife and children." So is it when one sinner looks upon another sinner. If really awakened to a true sense of his condition in the sight of God, each one says, "I cannot help you. I cannot even help myself." There are a number of foolish virgins with their lamps all gone out, and they have not a drop of oil between them and, therefore, not one of them can help another. So, sadness and inability are both implied in old Jacob's question to his sons, "Why do you look, one upon another?"

Besides that, I have no doubt that there was a great degree of bewilderment expressed on their countenances. One asked his brother, "Cannot you suggest anything?" "No," replied the other, "I am at my wits' end. I never was so puzzled before." "But, surely, So-and-So, the

one member of the family who has always been so quick with his suggestions, will have something to say in this crisis." No, not one of them had anything that he could contribute towards the hopefulness of the outlook. Sad, indeed, was the household in which all the brothers seemed, each one, more bewildered than the rest! So, if I were to gather, here, a company of men, awakened to a sense of their true condition as sinners, but not yet led to faith in Christ, and if I were to ask them, "What is to be done to deliver you from this sad state?" they would, in utter bewilderment, look first at me, and then at one another, and sadly say, "What can we do?" One of them might even cry, with John Newton—

"The help of men and angels joined Could never reach my case" and in his perplexity he might forget to quote the two lines that follow—

"Nor can I hope relief to find But in Your boundless Grace."

Such a man might say, "If all in this world who love me were to conspire together to assist me out of the deep pit of sin into which I have fallen, they could not lift me a single inch!" Bewilderment, then, was upon the faces of the 12 sons of Jacob.

Their looks also expressed apprehension. As they looked on each other, their faces wan, their persons gaunt, each one seemed to say to his brother, "I dare not tell you what I think." And the other would reply, "I knew what you meant before the dreadful words came from your lips, for what can this long famine bring but absolute starvation? We shall see our poor old father die, or, perhaps, we shall, ourselves, perish, and all our children with us before the old man passes away. Anyway, we are doomed. We cannot eat the grass. We cannot devour what the birds of Heaven might live upon— there is nothing for us to do but to die. There is no corn in the land. There is universal famine—grim death will soon overtake us." So they looked at one another every day with more and more of anxious foreboding, for the famine was in the land of Canaan as well as in all the other parts of the earth.

But, dear Friends, what good did their sad looks and their perplexed looks do? They did not make one mess of pottage for any of them! They did not grind for them even a single grain of corn! They were as bad off after all their despair as they were before it—their waiting was absolutely useless—no improvement in their condition came of it! And addressing you, my despairing friend, to whom I am sent tonight, I do not think that I ever saw you before, but you are here, and I am sent to speak thus to you! You have believed that there was no hope for you. You did not think that you could be saved and you have been, now, for years in that sad condition! What is the use of it to you? What is the good of all your despair? It has not improved you in the least! It has not even kept you back from sin. It has just made you sit in darkness, like one who is chilled and benumbed, and over whom death is slowly creeping. This despair is no benefit to

you. God help you to shake yourself clear of it even now! There is a lie at the bottom of your despair—there is hope— there is hope for the very chief of sinners! Do not believe what Satan tells you, that you must sit still and die.

The waiting time of the sons of Jacob was wasting time. If they had started earlier, they might have reached Egypt and, perhaps, have been back, again, with the corn which they had bought. But now the weary hours which brought them no hope were depriving them of the possibility of deliverance. So, dear Hearers, you have waited because you did not think that there was a possibility of your being saved—and all this waiting time has been wasted! Would God that you had been converted when you were a boy! Would God that you had known my Lord when you were a young man and started out in business! Oh, that you had known Him even in middle life! But now you are growing gray. Surely, the time past suffices to have been wasted. May God help you to begin, tonight, to obtain that heavenly bread, that true corn upon which your soul may feed!

These sons of Jacob had waited so long that if they delayed much longer, they could never go, for they would all be dead. Did not their old father hint at that when he said to them, "Get you down there, and buy for us there; that we may live, and not die"? Death seemed waiting for them outside the door and if bread did not soon come in, they would all have to be carried out as corpses. So, Sinner, you have waited long enough, and far too long! You have tarried so long that if you wait much longer, the great knell of your soul will toll out with that most dismal sound, "Lost, lost, lost, and lost forever!" God grant that this may not come to pass, but may the Word of the Lord, which I am declaring in my Master's name, lead you to another course of action than that of sitting still and looking, one upon another! I repeat what I said before, despair is useless! I think that you who have tried it are quite convinced that it is so—you cannot squeeze any juice out of this flint! You can dig nothing that will help you out of this barren soil!

II. But now, secondly, HOPE, as we preach it to the very chief of sinners, IS WELL-GROUNDED.

In the story before us, old Jacob said to his sons, "Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt." Good news had been heard. Did you notice that the first verse put it rather differently—"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt"? There is a good old proverb, quaint but true, "Faith sees with its ears." It is a new use for ears, according to some people's notions. My own opinion is that there is no organ that we have with which we can see so well as we can with our ears if we use them aright. In spiritual things, "faith comes by hearing," and that faith becomes the sight of things hoped for! Good old Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt and he heard that there was corn in Egypt. That is to say, he heard it upon such good evidence that the old gentleman seemed to see it! He had questioned some passing travelers, some Ishmaelites, some wandering Bedouins, who had answered him, "Oh, yes, there is corn in Egypt! We have been down there—we have bought sacks full of it! We have brought it away with us. We know it is so, for here it is." And Jacob, though yet very timorous, weighed the evidence, and judged all about the matter, and he said to himself, "Oh, yes! It is quite clear, I see that there is corn in Egypt."

Well now, dear Friends, the most of you now present and, I should think, all of you who have come through the rain this wet night, have heard this good news! "Heard it?" you say, "we have heard it times out of mind." I wonder how many times you have heard it? It would be worthwhile to sit down and figure away, to see if you could calculate how many times you have heard the Gospel. You know, when a boy has a father who is what a father ought to be, he says to him, "Do not let me have to speak to you twice, Sir." If he does speak to him twice, he says, "Do you think I am going to speak to you three times? Listen, I shall not stop at speaking if you do not listen pretty soon!" Would you kindly set down on a sheet of paper, not perhaps on a slate, for you might wipe it off, there—write down how many times God has spoken to you, distinctly, in the preaching of the Word? I will not ask you to reckon up how many times He has spoken to you in private, on your bed and so on. Some of you have heard thousands of sermons, but they have done you no good. I am afraid that you are like Bunyan's Slough of Despond. Many thousands of tons of the best road making material had been poured into that slough and it took it all in—and it was as bad a slough as ever! And is it not so with some of you?

I get astonished at some of you people who come and hear me whenever you can. I am not going to look at the particular persons to whom I refer, but it does astonish me when I know that there are those who have come here for years, and yet are as bare of religion as the palm of my hand is of hair! If you ask the wife or children about them, you will find that though they say, "we enjoy Mr. Spurgeon's ministry," yet they enjoy the drink rather more on certain other days! They would not miss a sermon! Yes, and they will even come to Prayer Meetings and enjoy Prayer Meetings. But still, ah me! Well, I will not say all that I know. May God have mercy upon such people! But what am I to do? Am I to keep on

preaching to people like that? Am I to go on perpetually washing Blackamoors who will never be a bit the whiter? God have mercy upon you and upon me, too, and grant that I may not labor in vain towards you, lest in the end your guilt should be increased by the rejection of His Truth!

The good news has been heard by all of you. Whatever may be the destiny of the heathen, they can, at the last, say, "We never heard of Christ. We were never bid to come and put our trust in Him. We never knew the story of the Cross and all the love of God in Christ Jesus." You cannot say that, but you will have to confess, some of you, in that Great Day, that you closed your ears to it all and would have none of it. The Lord prevent it, by His mercy!

Well, the good news has been heard, dear Friends, and, by many of us, the good news has been believed. I believe with Jacob that there is corn in Egypt, that is to say, I believe that there is salvation in Christ Jesus, that it has, "pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." There are many here who believe that Truth of God with me. There are myriads, all over the world, who believe this and who have seen it for themselves—there is pardon for sin! There is renewal of nature! There is every blessing that is needed, stored up

in Jesus Christ! The good news has been heard and the good news has been believed! If I were to ask you to stand up and give your testimony after the manner of the Salvation Army, very many here would do so, each one saying, "I believe it. It is even so. I have proved it to be true."

Further, the good news conveyed to you is to the point. Suppose that Jacob had said to his sons, "I believe that there is gold in Egypt," they might have asked him, "What has that to do with us?" Suppose he had said, "I believe that there is fine linen in Egypt." They did not need fine linen. Suppose he had said, "I believe that there are chariots in Egypt, and horses," for there were such in abundance. Solomon was known, in later days, to bring them out of Egypt. Yet Jacob's sons would have said, "Dear Father, we do not need horses. We do not want chariots. What we need is bread, for we are dying, or soon shall die, of hunger." Well now, my dear Hearers, there is, in Christ Jesus, exactly what you need! If you are guilty, there is pardon! If you are weak, there is strength! If you are foul, there is cleansing! If you are naked, there is clothing! If you are dead, there is life! In fact, there is, in Christ, all that you can possibly need! Christ is as much fitted for you as a glove is for a hand and He is exactly fitted for you, Mary, Thomas, or whoever you are—even as when I came to Him, I found Him to be exactly fitted for me! He is the very Savior for such a sinner as you!

Well now, this is good news concerning an available blessing. Supposing Jacob had said, "Dear sons, there is plenty of corn in Egypt, but you cannot have any of it. If you go down there, they will not sell any corn to you." Now, we who believe in the Doctrine of Election are supposed to say to some men, "It is of no use for you to believe—you will not have the blessing." I never said—I never thought such a thing—nor did any other preacher of the Doctrine of Election! We have freely declared to every man that whoever believes in Christ Jesus has everlasting life! And though we believe that God knows who will have it, even as God knew who would go down into Egypt, yet that does not in the least affect the freeness of the preaching of the Gospel! Let those who hear us bear witness to the fact. There was never a man, or woman, or child, yet, who applied to God through Jesus Christ for mercy, who was refused. "Him that comes to Me," says Christ, "I will in no wise cast out." If you believe, you live. If you believe, you are saved. We have eternal life when we come and trust in Jesus. Believe and receive it at the hands of Christ. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Let that bell ring round the Tabernacle! "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." If you believe, eternal life is yours. So, this good news is concerning an available blessing.

And, once more, this good news is in the present tense. Jacob did not say to his sons, "There was corn in Egypt," but, "I have heard that there is corn in Egypt." So say I to you—"There is salvation. There is forgiveness. There is acceptance, there is reconciliation—there is eternal life!" There is, in Christ Jesus, all that is necessary to lift a soul from

the portals of Hell to the gates of Heaven! There is now, on this 15th day of the month of July, 1888—there is corn in Egypt, there is eternal life for all who trust in Jesus—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One! There is life at this moment for you!"

I do not know how to preach more plainly and simply to you. The last thing that crosses my mind is to try and make "a fine discourse." All I want to do is to talk right to your hearts about the way to Heaven—and not to let you go until you have come to Jesus and have trusted in Him.

So I have set before you two things, first, that despair is useless, and, next, that there is a hope which is well grounded. There is nothing more certain in this world than that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved. I wish that you

would all come and try, and see for yourselves, for we have not preached to you cunningly-devised fables, but the most sure Word of God, which we have tasted and handled for ourselves!

III. So I shall close with my third division—ACTION IS REASONABLE.

my dear despairing Hearer, I say again that I do not know who you may be, but I know that I am sent to you, tonight, with a message! I wish that I knew you, so that I could take you by the hand and have you here on this very platform, and look into your eyes with my eyes. But as I cannot do that, I will speak to you as if I were doing it.

It was time that these men should go at once to Egypt, for they would die if they did not go. They could but die if they went to Egypt—if they were met by robbers on the road, and killed, they could but die. This is your case. Without Christ, you must eternally die—there is no hope for you. Remain as you are and you are damned. No, I soften not the word, for it is no light sentence which the word conveys. If you do not find Christ, you are lost forever! Say, then, as we have often sung—

"I can but perish if I go; I am resolved to try! For if I stay away, I know I must forever die."

I will here bring up Giant Despair if I can, in the rear, that he may howl a little at you, and set your feet in motion. There is no hope for you unless you go to the Savior, even to Jesus Christ. You must die if you do not go to Him.

It was very reasonable that Jacob's sons should go down to Egypt, for evidently others had gone there and had found corn. O man, would to God that you would repent and leave your sins, and come to Christ, for others have done so, and they have found eternal life! There never was, there never will be, there cannot be one who ever obeyed the Gospel call and yet was disappointed! I challenge the depths of Hades and the deep abyss of Hell, itself, to display a single soul that truly sought the Lord and was refused! No, if you come to Him by Jesus Christ, He must receive you. Therefore, you who feel your need of Christ, I beseech you to awaken yourselves and seek Him now!

Further, these sons of Jacob got what they went for. They went to buy corn, and corn they bought, and plenty of it. And you may fare better than they did. It is not half such a task for you to go to Jesus as it was for them to go to Egypt. You can get to Christ in the twinkling of an eye! Behold, He comes flying to your relief. One look of faith and you are at His feet! Trust is the great railway that will bear you to the blessed terminal of salvation!

The sons of Jacob found in Egypt what they went for and they found it on better terms than they supposed. Jacob said, "Buy for us there," but they had their money put back in the mouth of their sacks! Joseph did not want their money—he would not sell anything to his own brothers, he would give them whatever they needed! The Lord Jesus Christ does not need your money. He does not even need your repentance and your faith as the purchase-price of salvation. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." It is a free gift to you who are poor as beggary itself. Do but come and you shall find how free are the gifts of Sovereign Grace!

And, in addition, Jacob's sons gained a great deal more than they bargained for, for while they brought corn home, they found that there was a great man in Egypt who was their brother—and they were invited to go and stay with him and they were made great men in that land! Oh, if you will but come to Christ, you will come for silver, but you will get gold! You will come for gold and He will give you diamonds! You will come for a rag and He will give you a royal robe! You will come to Him for life and He will give you everlasting glory! He gives infinitely more than any of us dare to ask, or even think—and happy is that man who does but come to Him! Oh, if you had any idea of what Christ will make of you, you would want wings to your heels to fly to Him with all your might! If that young woman did but know what joy the love of Christ would pour into her heart, she would not wait till tomorrow's sun had risen ere she had laid hold of Jesus Christ! When we come to Christ, there is a destiny before us which an angel's future does not rival! We become brothers of Christ, heirs of God, peers of the blood imperial, exalted to sit with Christ upon His heavenly Throne and to share in all His joys! Would God that you would come! If you did but know what is to be had by trusting in Jesus, how swiftly you would be drawn to Him!—

"His worth, if all the nations knew for Sure, the whole world would love Him, too," and if they did but know what He gives, they would hold out both hands and take from Him, now, all that He delights to bestow upon those who trust Him!

I have finished my discourse to the despairing when I have made just two or three concluding remarks.

These sons of Jacob went down into Egypt and they did well. Right reasoning led them to go when they heard that there was corn there and knew that they needed it. But they were never invited to go there. Joseph did not send an invitation to Jacob, Reuben, Judah and Simeon, saying, "Come down into Egypt." Up to the moment when he revealed himself, they did not know that he was there. They were never invited and yet they went. Is there

anybody here who says, "I do not think I am invited in the Bible to trust Christ"? Then come to Him whether you are invited or not! Do as these men did—they were not invited, but they went! The feasts of God are of this kind, "Whoever will, let him come." There are no tickets demanded at God's gate of mercy. If you come, you would not have come if He had not drawn you, for no man can come to Christ unless the Father, who sent His Son, draws him, and, "Him that comes to Me," says Christ, "I will in no wise cast out." You are the right man if you but come, for the wrong man never came, never can come and never thinks of coming! You are the man to be saved if you but trust Christ!

But I must remind you that there are many of you who have been invited, pressed, urged, entreated with tears to come to Christ. I will not say anything about the many times that I have tried to press those things upon you, for I feel my feebleness, and, if you refuse me, I do not wonder. But still, if I knew how to put eternal things before you better than I do, how earnestly would I labor for the salvation of your souls! Sometimes, when I am at home, I say to myself, "That is it. I think I see, now, how to put the Truth of God to the people." But when I get here, I do not feel that I can speak as I desire. What more is a man to say than to tell you that you are in danger, that you will perish if you despair of hope, that there is good ground for hope and, that if you come to your God, trusting in Jesus as your Savior, He will never cast you away? Therefore, come, and come at once! Come even now, while sitting in those pews! What more can I say? Spirit of God, You say whatever more is needed and make what is said to go home to the hearts of the hearers!

Now, note again, that you are in a better state than the sons of Jacob, for you are invited, and next, you have no journey to make. How far is it to Christ? Well, there is no distance! If you believe, He is there. Our railway people, as a rule, in making railways to a certain town, do not make the railway to the town, but within a half-mile, or a mile, or two miles, so that you must have an omnibus or a cab to get into the town. And there is far too much Gospel preaching that is like that. It is so far before you get to Christ and when you do get to Him, it needs another journey in your own omnibus to finish up the work!

But I believe that the railway to Heaven for you starts just there, in that pew where you are sitting, and that it goes all the way, and that if you enter the glorious Free-Grace train, it will carry you to the terminal! And if you take a ticket, tonight, with a simple trust in the Lord Jesus, you will not need any new ticket, but it will take you all the way through! Oh, I would to God that by faith you would take that ticket right now! There is a journey to get to Heaven, but there is no journey to get to Christ, for He is here! You need a Mediator between your souls and God, but you do not need a Mediator between your souls and Christ! You must be prepared to see God in Heaven, but you need not be prepared to see Christ on earth! You may come to Him just as you are! Here He is, look at Him by faith and the great transaction is done!

Last of all, you are informed, as these sons of Jacob were not informed, that no payment is required. Jacob said to his sons, "Take money in your hand," and when they went the next time, he said, "Take double money in your hand." That was very honest on his part, to send money to make up for what had been put back in the sacks, as well as the double price, for the wheat would have risen since the last time, and old Jacob also said, "Take of the best fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds." That is just what human nature says, "Take Christ a present. Carry something with you." Now, I would advise you to drop that present into the sea! Do not take anything with you to Christ except your emptiness. That is all He wants—take your emptiness, and He will fill it! Take your sin, and He will wash it away!

When persons advertise that they clean garments—(you see their notices everywhere, nowadays, a wonderful trade it must be)—do they expect that when you send a coat to be cleaned, you are to put a guinea in the pocket? Oh, dear no! You send the garment to be cleaned—you will have to pay for the work, one of these days, but you need not put sovereigns in the pocket! Just take your soul to Christ to be cleansed, with nothing but the spot, and the stain, and the filth—and He will make it whiter than the driven snow!

The Holy Spirit's message is, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Tarry not to cleanse or mend, but come to Christ just as you are and come at once! Sons of Jacob, starving for need of heavenly food, look no

longer, one upon another, but up and away to the Christ who has a superabundance of everything you need! Freely He invites you—gladly go to Him! Spirit of God, compel them to do so, by Your sweet love, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—531, 375, 435.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: [Isaiah 48](#).

Verse 1. Hear you this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. There were always false professors and, I suppose, there always will be till Christ comes. A Judas was among the 12 Apostles and we cannot wonder that we find such in every Church—but what a dreadful thing it is to wear the name of God and yet not really to serve Him—to be called Christians and yet not to be like Christ! It must be a very God-provoking thing to be called by His name and then insult it by not being true to it.

2. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The LORD of Hosts is His name. They profess to trust Him, but they do not love Him—"they call themselves of the holy city," but they certainly are not holy citizens. Ah me, that God should have to speak to men upon such a matter as this! It is self-evidently wicked, but they will not see it.

3. I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of My mouth, and I showed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. There is no better proof that God is God than that His prophecies have been fulfilled. Only the eternal can see into the future. He has done so and every Word of His has either been fulfilled, or will yet be fulfilled.

4. 5. Because I knew that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to you: before it came to pass I showed it you: lest you should say, My idol has done them, and my graven image, and my molten image has commanded them. See the care of God towards the most obstinate of men! He knows that they will pervert things, so He prevents them as far as it is possible to do so! He tells them what is to happen, that they may not, afterwards, say that their idol gods have done it. Ah, dear Friends, God has taken great interest in many of us! He has, as it were, laid His plans to keep us out of sin and yet we have often broken out, and have gone over hedge and ditch in the ways of sin. We have seemed resolved to do evil—we have been desperately set on mischief—therefore He speaks of us as being "obstinate." "Your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass." Will God ever speak in mercy to such people as these? We shall see as we read on.

6-8. You have heard, see all this; and will not you declare it? I have showed you new things from this time, even hidden things, and you did not know them. They are created now, and not from the beginning, even before the day when you heard them not; lest you should say, Behold, I knew them. Yes, you heard not; yes, you knew not; yes, from that time that your ear was not opened: for I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb. What a description! Treacherous, false, yes, very treacherous—beyond the usual degree of treachery! Transgressors from our very birth—born in sin. The very heart is wrong and all that comes out of us is, therefore, wrong. And now, what follows?

9. For My name's sake will I defer My anger, and for My praise will I refrain for you, that I cut you not off. "I cannot spare you for your own sake; but I will spare you for My name's sake. I cannot spare you because of anything good in you; but I will spare you because of good in Myself." If God can glorify Himself by your salvation, He finds a blessed motive for saving you, and, since there is no good in you, He will fall back upon His own Glory and save you for His own name's sake!

10. Behold, I have refined you, but not with silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction. You sinful one, yet one of His own children, He will refine you again and again, and He will glorify Himself by saving you.

11. For My own sake, even for My own sake, will I do it: for how should My name be polluted? And I will not give My Glory unto another. This verse ought to ring like music in the ears of one who is seeking mercy and who cannot find out how mercy can come to him.

12, 13. Harken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, My called; I am He; I am the First, I also am the Last. My hand also has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together. What a great God is He whose right hand spanned the heavens, making the arch of the sky, as it were, with the span of His hand!

14. All you, assemble yourselves, and hear, which among them has declared these things? He still dwells upon prophecy. God claims that He is God because He foretold all that happened, which the idol gods could not do.

14-18. The LORD has loved him: He will do His pleasure on Babylon, and His arm shall be on the Chaldeans. I, even I, have spoken; yes, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous. Come you near unto Me, hear you this, I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and His Spirit, has sent me. Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. I am the Lord your God which teaches you to profit, which leads you by the way that you should go. O that you had listened to My Commandments! God again breaks out in lamentations over His wandering people! Not only is He ready to forgive them, but He grieves to think that they should have brought so much sorrow on themselves.

18, 19. Then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea: your seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of your heart like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before Me. All manner of possible good would have been yours had you not rebelled against God. And as you have lost it, God grieves that it should be so.

20. Go you forth of Babylon, flee you from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare you, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth, say you, The LORD has redeemed His servant, Jacob. What a grand message for anyone to tell! Tell it, tell it, tell it everywhere, that Jehovah has redeemed His people!

21. And they thirsted not when He led them through the deserts. Neither shall you thirst, O redeemed one, when you are in the desert!

21. He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them. Most unlikely places shall yield you succor.

21. He split the rock, also, and the waters gushed out. And yet, to finish up the chapter, stands this remarkable sentence—

22. There is no peace, says the LORD, unto the wicked. O God, have mercy upon us, and let us not be numbered with them!